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Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 IO-06 ARA-10 CIAE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 INR-05 L-01 SP-02 PM-03 DODE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5924
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USUN NY
USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KIGALI 447

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, MARR, CU, UR, BU, RW
SUBJECT: HEIGHTENED GOR WORRIES OVER SOVIETS/CUBANS

REF: KIGALI 434 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: AT PRESIDENT'S REQUEST, FONMIN PASSED ON TO ME HIS ANXIETIES OVER INCREASING SOVIET AND CUBAN ACTIVISM IN REGION AND HIS DOUBTS ABOUT US WILLINGNESS TO MEET CHALLENGE. HEIGHTENED WORRIES BASED ON ALLEGED CUBAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE PLANNED FOR BURUNDI, REPLACEMENT SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO RWANDA, AND SUPPOSED US "ABANDONMENT" OF MOBUTU. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING SIGNATURE MARCH 21 OF TWO AID AGREEMENTS, CONFIDENTIAL

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FONMIN NSEKALIJE ASKED ME TO REMAIN BEHIND FOR LENGTHY PRIVATE DISCUSSION OF "VERY SERIOUS POLITICAL PROBLEMS." AT PRESIDENT HABYARIMANA'S REQUEST, HE SAID, HE WANTED TO EXPRESS TO ME GOR CONCERN AT INCREASING EVIDENCE OF SOVIET AND CUBAN DESIGNS IN AFRICA AND INDEED ON RWANDA'S DOORSTEP. AWARE THAT I WAS ABOUT TO DEPART FOR WASHINGTON ON CONSULTATIONS, PRESIDENT ASKED HIM ALSO TO VOICE CONCERN

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AT APPARENT US AND WESTERN DISINCLINATION TO FACE UP TO SOVIET INTENTIONS AND MOVE EFFECTIVELY TO COUNTER THEM. FRIENDS OF WEST IN AFRICA, HE SAID, WERE DEEPLY TROUBLED WITH DOUBTS OVER WESTERN WILLINGNESS TO COME TO THEIR AID IN FACE OF SOVIET/CUBAN THREAT.

2. NSEKALIJE CITED SOVIET "SUCCESS" IN ANGOLA AND DECISIVE INTERVENTION IN HORN OF AFRICA AS OBVIOUS EXAMPLES. LESS VISIBLE, HE SAID, WERE "SOME TWO OR THREE THOUSAND" CUBANS BEING SENT TO BENIN (WHERE NSEKALIJE JUST TRAVELED TO CHAIR OCAM MINISTERIAL) AND "RECALL" OF BOTH FRENCH AND US AMBASSADORS FROM COTONOUT. NSEKALIJE SAID HE PERSONALLY OBSERVED TWO JUMBO JETS ARRIVE WHILE HE WAS THERE, CARRYING CUBAN TROOPS AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT. FONMIN ADDED THERE WAS ALSO REASON TO EXPECT UNFAVORABLE SHIFTS OF POSITION IN BOTH SUDAN AND EGYPT, PARTICULARLY IN LATTER IF SADAT IS UNABLE TO SURVIVE SETBACKS TO HIS MIDDLE EAST PEACE INITIATIVES.

3. THEN FONMIN GOT AROUND TO WHAT WAS WORRYING GOR MOST: ALLEGED NEW CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN BURUNDI NEXT DOOR. NSEKALIJE ASSUME I HAD ALREADY HEARD CUBANS WERE OPENING AN EMBASSY IN BUJUMBURA. HE SAID OUR INTELLIGENCE PROBABLY HAD ALSO REVEALED PRESENCE OF TWO CUBAN MILITARY OFFICERS IN SOVIET EMBASSY IN BUJUMBURA, WHOSE FUNCTION, HE SAID, WAS TO IMPLEMENT MILITARY CONFIDENTIAL

COOPERATION AGREEMENT ALLEGEDLY SIGNED IN HAVANA IN 1976 BY BURUNDI FONMIN. WITHOUT TELLING ME HOW HE WAS SO SURE, NSEKALIJE ASSERTED THAT WITHIN TWO YEARS THERE WOULD BE AT LEAST 200 AND MAYBE UP TO 500 CUBAN MILITARY ADVISERS IN BURUNDI (CF REFTEL). NSEKALIJE POINTED TO RECENT VISIT TO BUJUMBURA OF ZAIRE REBEL LEADER LAURANT KABILA AND HIS ALLEGED CONTACTS THERE WITH SOVIETS/CUBANS AS AN INDICATION OF THE SORT OF MISCHIEF LIKELY TO RESULT FROM NEW CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN BURUNDI.

4. SOVIETS ALSO INTENDED TO PAY MORE ATTENTION DIRECTLY TO RWANDA, SAID FONMIN. MOSCOW HAD JUST RECALLED AGING, RECLUSIVE AMBASSADOR JILIAKOV (FONMIN DESCRIBED HIM AS "FATHERLY") AND IMMEDIATELY REQUESTED AGREMENT FOR A SUCCESSOR, DESCRIBED BY NSEKALIJE AS YOUNGER AND MORE DYNAMIC. THERE WAS LITTLE DOUBT IN HIS OR PRESIDENT'S MIND, HE SAID, THAT THIS SIGNALED SOVIET CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE INFLUENCE AND LEVERAGE WITHIN RWANDA.

5. TO MY SURPRISE, NSEKALIJE RESURRECTED "TUTSI REFUGEE" THREAT IN THIS CONTEXT, SAYING MANY OF 30,000 REFUGEES IN BURUNDI HAD BEEN ARMED AND WERE IN POSITION TO BE USED BY

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SOVIETS/CUBANS TO EXERT ENORMOUS PRESSURE ON RWANDA.
INDEED, HE SAID, BORDER PROBLEMS WITH BURUNDI HAD TAKEN
VERY UNPLEASANT TURN WITHIN PAST FEW MONTHS, WHEN (HE
ASSERTED) BORDER MARKERS ALONG THE BUGASERA REGION HAD
BEEN ARBITRARILY MOVED HALF KILOMETER NORTHWARD. SEVERAL
EXCHANGES OF HIGH LEVEL VISITS WERE NECESSARY TO DEFUSE
THE SITUATION IN WHICH, AT ONE POINT, RWANDAN INTERIOR
MINISTER KANYARENGWE THREATENED GRB COUNTERPART HE WOULD
USE MILITARY FORCE TO THROW BURUNDI OFF THAT TERRITORY.

6. NSEKALIJE SAID PRESIDENT DEEPLY TROUBLED BY APPARENT
US UNWILLINGNESS TO STAND UP TO SOVIETS AND AID FRIENDLY
AFRICANS IN RESISTING COMMUNIST INROADS. PARTICULARLY
DISTURBING WAS OUR APPARENT ABANDONMENT OF ZAIRE'S MOBUTU.
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NSEKALIJE SAID THAT, RWANDA'S GOOD NEIGHBOR EFFORTS
TOWARD TANZANIA, UGANDA, AND BURUNDI NOTWITHSTANDING, ITS
BASIC SECURITY TIES REMAIN WITH ZAIRE, AND IT NATURALLY
WORRIED AT EVERY SIGN OF DISSIDENCE IN SHABA AND KIVU.
IMPLICATIONS OF CUBAN PRESENCE BURUNDI WERE, OF COURSE,
DISTRESSING WITH RESPECT TO BOTH THESE REGIONS OF ZAIRE.
IN THIS CONTEXT IT WAS ALL THE MORE UNTHINKABLE THAT US
SHOULD TURN ITS BACK ON MOBUTU, AS IT SEEMED TO HAVE
SINCE SHABA INVASION. ANYONE WHO MIGHT TAKE MOBUTU'S
PLACE, HE ASSERTED, WOULD SURELY BE ANIT-WESTERN --
ANOTHER LUMUMBA (HE MADE NO DIRECT MENTION OF RECENT COUP
PLOTTING, BUT LEFT IMPRESSION HE WAS UNSURE WHETHER WE

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NSAE-00 NSCE-00 INR-05 L-01 SP-02 PM-03 DODE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5925
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USUN NY
USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KIGALI 447
LIMDIS
WERE INVOLVED). FONMIN SAID OUR SHIFT OF FOCUS AWAY
FROM ZAIRE AND TOWARDS NIGERIA WAS CERTAIN TO LEAVE
POLITICAL VACUUM WHICH SOVIETS WERE HUNGRY TO FILL.

7. RESPONDING, I SOUGHT TO ASSURE NSEKALIJE THAT US WAS
BY NO MEANS "ABANDONING" AFRICAN FRIENDS, THAT TO CON-
TRARY CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAD SHOWN MUCH MORE INTEREST
AND CONCERN HERE THAN ITS PREDECESSOR. THERE WAS, I
CONCEDED, SOME DIFFERENCE OF OPINIONWITHIN ADMINISTRATION
OVER HOW US INTERESTS SHOULD BE EXPRESSED. WE WERE
PARTICULARLY CONCERNED, I SAID, TO INSURE THAT OLD COLD
WAR CONTESTS WITH SOVIETS WERE NOT REVIVED HERE AND THAT
AFRICANS THEMSELVES WERE GIVEN CHANCE TO WORK OUT
PROBLEMS AND CONFLICTS WITHOUT GREAT POWER INTERVENTION.
WHILE WE WERE INDEED CONCERNED AT SOVIET ROLE IN THE
HORN AND ANXIOUS THAT SOVIETS/CUBANS NOT BE PROVIDED NEW
OPPORTUNITIES IN RHODESIA, I ADDED THAT OUR PRIMARY
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STRATEGY WAS TO WORK FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS RATHER THAN
TO FAN FLAMES BY SUPPLYING ARMS TO ONE OR ANOTHER CON-
TENDER EXCEPT AS LAST RESORT. I SOUGHT PARTICULARLY TO
ASSURE FONMIN WE HAD NOT TURNED OUR BACKS ON ZAIRE,
POINTING TO OUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL
"MOBUTU PLAN" ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, BUT I CONCEDED MANY
IN WASHINGTON WERE ALARMED AT HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN
ZAIRE AND CONCERNED THAT OUR AID NOT BE USED TO
REINFORCE NEGATIVE FEATURES OF PRESENT REGIME.

8. CONCERNING RWANDA'S OWN SECURITY PROBLEMS, I SAID I
WOULD BY ALL MEANS PASS ALONG FONMIN'S WARNING BUT COULD
PREDICT THAT WASHINGTON REACTION WOULD BE TO ENCOURAGE
PERSEVERANCE TOWARD PEACEFUL COOPERATION AMONG RWANDA AND
ITS NEGHBORS. I SAID WASHINGTON GREATLY ADMIRED FORWARD-
LOOKING EFFORTS OF BOTH HABYARIMANA AND BAGAZA IN
ATTEMPTING TO OVERCOME TRADITIONAL HOSTILITIES AND BUILD
HARMONIOUS FUTURE. BOTH CEPGL AND AKAGERA BASIN ECONOMIC
AGREEMENTS WERE ADMIRABLE STEPS IN THIS DIRECTION, AND I

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PROMISED I WOULD SOLICIT GREATER WASHINGTON ATTENTION TO BOTH AS MEANS OF BOLSTERING COOPERATION AND THEREBY DIMINISHING POSSIBILITIES FOR FRICTIONS THAT MIGHT BE EXPLOITED BY OUTSIDERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, I REMAINED QUITE CERTAIN WASHINGTON WOULD CONTINUE TO OPPOSE ANY FORM OF ARMS ASSISTANCE TO RWANDA.

9. NSEKALIJE SAID HE WAS PLEASED TO HEAR OF OUR DETER-MINATION TO REMAIN INVOLVED AND INFLUENTIAL IN AFRICA, ALTHOUGH HE AND PRESIDENT BELIEVED WE CONTINUE TO UNDER-ESTIMATE SOVIET INTENTIONS. HE SAID RWANDA WOULD CON-TINUE TO DO EVERYTHING IT COULD TO IMPROVE TIES WITH BURUNDI. BUT HE WARNED THAT PRESIDENT BAGAZA WAS IN A WEAK AND VULNERABLE POSITION, AND HOWEVER MUCH HE MIGHT CONFIDENTIAL

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WISH TO PURSUE ENLIGHTENED, FRIENDLY POLICIES, IN BACK-GROUND WAS ENORMOUS WEIGHT OF TUTSI ANIMOSITY TOWARD RANDA AND FEAR OF BURUNDI'S OWN HUTU MAJORITY, AND DEEP-RUNNING TUSEI BELIEF THAT CONFRONTATION WAS INEVIT-ABLE. AGAINST THIS BACKDROP, THERE WAS NOT WAY BAGAZA COULD SAY NO TOLEFT-WING RADICAL TUTSIS SEEKING MILITARY SUPPORT FROM COMMUNISTS TO PREPARE FOR EVENTUAL TUTSI-HUTU CATACLYSM, ONE IN WHICH RWANDA WOULD BE VIEWED AS INSTIGATOR AND THEREFORE BURUNDI'S ENEMY NUMBER ONE.

10. COMMENT: HOWEVER ILL-FOUNDED THEY MAY TURN OUT TO BE, RWANDAN WORRIES ARE EVIDENTLY GENUINE. OUR "TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY" EXPLATION OF SOVIETS' AFRICA STRATEGY CARRIES VERY LITTLE WEIGHT IN FACE OF THEIR OWN ESTIMATES OF SOVIET/CUBAN INROADS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN CONTEXT OF ABIDING HUTU-TUTSI RIVALRY. THESE PERCEPTIONS COUNT HEAVILY IN TERMS OF PROGRESS TOWARD OUR OWN GOALS HERE: ANXIETY OVER GROSS MILITARY IMBALANCE BETWEEN RWANDA AND BURUNDI (NOT TO MENTION UGANDA) CAN EASILY UNDERMINE HUMAN RIGHTS ACHIEVEMENTS AND REGIONAL COOPERATION, BOTH OF WHICH IN PRECARIOUS EMBRYONIC STAGE AT PRESENT. NEED-LESS TO SAY, THEY ALSO STRENGTHEN HAND OF ARMY "RETRO-GRADES" WHO ARE ETREADY CRITICAL OF HABYARIMANA'S MORE FORESIGHTED INITIATIVES.

11. WITH REGARD TO ALLEGATIONS OF SOVIET/CUBAN MILITARY INTENTIONS IN BURUNDI, WE HAVE NO BASIS TO ASSESS ACCURACY OF NSEKALIJE'S INFORMATION -- FONMIN IS NOTORIOUSLY INACCURATE ABOUT SUCH MATTERS. HE WAS EVASIVE WHEN I CHALLENGED HIM SUBSTANTIATE ALLEGATIONS ("YOUR CIA CAN EASILY DO THAT"). HOWEVER, HIS REVELATION THAT USSR WAS REPLACING AMB JILIAKOV WAS CONCRETE ENOUGH, AS HE POINTED TO REQUEST FOR AGREMENT SITTING ON HIS DESK.

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12. KEY ELEMENT IN NSEKALIJE'SARGUMENT WAS OF COURSE
GOR DOUBT ABOUT OUR INTENTIONS IN ZAIRE. HE AND PRESIDENT
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BELIEVE OUR VIEW OF STRATEGIC FOREST THERE MAY BE
OBSCURED BY HUMAN RIGHTS TREES WHICH NOW PREOCCUPY US.
KIGALI-KINSHASA-WASHINGTON AXIS IS CENTRAL TO RWANDAN
SECURITY STRATEGY (I.E. AS LONG AS US TIES WITH ZAIRE
ARE STRONG, RWANDA'S BEST BET IS TO REMAIN CLOSELY
ALIGNED WITH THE LATTER). SHOULD SOVIET/CUBAN LEVERAGE
ON KIVU AND SHABA PROVINCES -- WHOSE BREAKAWAY TENDENCIES
WELL-KNOWN HERE -- BE ENHANCED, KIGALI LIFELINE TO
KINSHASA WOULD BE SERIOUSLY JEOPARDIZED. I SUSPECT THAT
DANGER OF SUCH LEVERAGE POSED BY CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE
IN BURUNDI WHAT MOSTLYWORRIES PRESIDENT, EVEN MORE
THAN BILATERAL/ETHNIC RAMIFICATIONS. (INTERESTINGLY,
LOCAL NEWS ACCOUNTS OF MY MEETING WITH FONMIN MADE POINT
OF FACT THAT SESSION LASTED 2-1/2 HOURS, UNUSUALLY LONG
AND CERTAINLY MORE THAN REQUIRED FOR THE STATED PURPOSE
OF SIGNING TWO AID PROJECT AGREEMENTS.)

13. I WILL OF COURSE CONTINUE TO COUNSEL RESTRAINT AND
PERSEVERANCE IN OVERCOMING RIVALRIES WITH BURUNDI, BUT
IF PREDICTIONS OF CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE THERE PROVE
TRUE, WE WILL SURELY BE IN FOR INCREASED PRESSURE TO
HELP RWANDA BUILD "DISSUASION" FORCE WHICH IT BELIEVES
IT NEEDS. MEANWHILE, I AM EVER MORE CONVINCED OF THE
NEED TO SIGNAL TO HABYARIMANA, AT LEAST, OUR APPRECIATION
FORRECONCILIAITION EFFORTS TO DATE (KIGALI 388 NOTAL)
AND OF THE VALUE OF NEW STEPS TO STRENGTHEN BILATERAL
PROFESSIONALMILITARY TIES (KIGALI 248 NOTAL). I TRUST
CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON BEGINNING APRIL 7 WILL AFFORD
OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE A HARDER LOOK AT THESE QUESTIONS.
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